

THE CORRESPONDENT.

MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PREVALEBIT.

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VOL. 2.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE TRAVELS OF SCARMENTADO.

From the French of Voltaire.

I was born in the city of Candia, in 1600. My father was governor of the city, and I remember that a bad poet made bad verses in my praise, in which he proved my descent from Minos; but my father having been disgraced, my poet made more verses, according to which I was only sprung from Pasiphai and her lover.

At the age of 15 my father sent me to study at Rome. I set out full of hope, expecting to be taught all manner of truths; for till then I had learned nothing but lies, after the fashion of this world. Monsignor Profundo, my director, was a curious man, and one of the most formidable sages the world ever saw. He wanted me to learn the Categories of Aristotle, and tried hard to teach me some categories of another description; but I escaped, luckily. I saw processions, exorcisms, and some tricks. A very amiable young lady took it into her head to show me some kindness. She was tenderly loved by the reverend father Stiletto, and the reverend father Ratsbane, two young brothers of an order which does not now exist. She did me the favor to prefer me before them both, and I was very grateful; but I ran the risk of excommunication, for which I did not care, and of being stabbed or poisoned—I thought these more serious matters, and left Rome, mightily delighted with St. Peters.

Then I travelled through France. It was in the time of Louis the First. The first thing they asked me was, if I would like for my breakfast a small piece of the Marshal D'Ancre, whom the priests and the people had roasted, and whose flesh brought a very high price.

From thence I went into England. It was no better there. Some pious Catholics had resolved, for the good of the Church, to blow up into the air the king, the royal family, and the parliament, and to deliver England from the heretics. They showed me the place where queen Mary, of blessed memory, had caused more than 500 of her people to be burnt. An Irish priest assured me that this was an excellent thing; in the first place, because the roasted were all English, and secondly, because they had never used holy water, and would not believe in the hole of St. Patrick. But he was surprised that queen Mary was not yet canonized, and comforted himself with hoping that she would be, whenever the cardinal nephew should be at leisure.

From England I crossed over into Holland. When I arrived at the Hague, they had just chopped off the head of the venerable Barnevelt; a man who had rendered the most important services to his country. I asked what was his crime, and if he had committed treason against the republic? "He has done worse than that," replied a preacher in a black gown; "he dared to believe that men might be saved by good works as well as by faith. You must be sensible that, if such opinions should gain ground, a republic could not subsist, and that the severest laws must be put in force to suppress such horrible impiety." A profound politician of the country said to me, with a sigh, "Alas! this happy state of things will not last forever. It is but seldom that the people display so much zeal. In general they are too much infected with the abominable doctrine of toleration. I shudder to think of the consequences." As for me, until this fatal time of toleration should come, I made haste to escape, and embarked for Spain.

The court was at Seville; the gallions had arrived, and joy and abundance reigned throughout the whole of this beautiful country. "Here," said I, "I shall at last be happy." As I was walking, one day, I saw, at the end of a superb alley of orange and lemon trees, a sort of vast amphitheatre, surrounded with seats, covered with silks and embroidery. The king, the queen, the infants and the infantas were seated under a magnificent canopy. Opposite this august assemblage were another throne and canopy, higher and more richly decorated than theirs. I said to my companion, "Unless that throne be intended for God, I do not see who is to sit upon it." These indiscreet words were overheard by a grave Spaniard, and cost me dear in the end. I thought we were to see a tournament or a bull fight, when the grand inquisitor appeared, and took his place upon the throne, from which he pronounced a blessing upon the king and the people. Then came an army of monks, marching two and two; black, white, grey; some with shoes and some barefoot; some with long beards and some with no beards; some with pointed cowls and some without cowls; then the hangman; then, surrounded by a crowd of alguazils and grandees, about forty persons, clothed in mantles and high caps covered with painted flames and devils. These were Jews who would not be persuaded to renounce Moses, and Christians who had married their cousins, or who did not go on pilgrimage to the shrine of our Lady of Autocha, or who had not thought it advisable to give all their ready money to the wandering friars.

The priests and the people very devoutly chanted several beautiful hymns; after which they roasted the criminals before a slow fire, and the royal family appeared to be much edified. That night, just as I was going to bed, two officers of the inquisition came to pay me a visit. They embraced me tenderly, and, without speaking a word, conducted me very politely to a cool and comfortable dungeon, furnished with a straw bed and an exceedingly well made crucifix. There I staid six weeks, at the end of which the reverend father inquisitor ordered me to be brought before him. He received me with a warmth of kindness that was truly affecting, protesting that he regretted extremely the inconveniences of my lodging, but that all the cells were full, and hoped that I should be better accommodated when I came again. Finally, he

asked me very kindly if I knew for what I was imprisoned. I said to the reverend father, that I supposed it was for my sins. "True, my dear son," said the reverend father, "but for what sin?" I racked my brains to no purpose: I could not conjecture what might be my crime. The charitable father gave me a hint—those indiscreet words of mine. I got off for a few hundred lashes and a fine of 30,000 reals. Before my liberation I was taken before the grand inquisitor to thank him for his mercy. He was one of the politest men in the world, and asked me very graciously how I liked my entertainment. I told him it was delightful, and then made all possible haste to run away, delightful as it was; but before I went I had time to read the memoirs of the famous bishop of Chiapa, who says that the jesuits burned, or drowned, or cut the throats of ten millions of infidels in America, to convert them. I expect the good bishop has exaggerated a little; but supposing there were but five millions, even then, it is a very pleasant history.

From Spain I thought of going into Turkey; but I resolved to take good care how I spoke of the ceremonies I might see. These Turks, said I to my companions, are unbaptized miscreants, and therefore they must be even more dangerous than the reverend fathers inquisitors. We must hold our tongues while we are among them.

To be continued.

SPIRITS AND DEMONS.

Continued.

The first inventors of these phantoms appear to have been the Egyptians, who believed that the spirits of the deceased always attended their bodies where they were deposited; and, therefore, they embalmed them with rich gums and spices to preserve their figure entire, and entombed them in stately mausoleums, with costly apartments for their souls to solace in. It was this opinion which gave rise to the building of the expensive and useless pyramids, to receive souls of a higher degree. From Egypt, these airy beings were transplanted into Greece; and thence to Rome. The Greek and Roman poets embellished their fictions with them; and the priests were not long in turning them to profit. Both priests and poets added to the number. They filled their woods, groves, rivers, rocks, houses, and the air itself with romantic deities. They had their demi-gods, satyrs, dryads, hemi-dryads, penates, lares, fauns, nymphs, and a thousand others. And when the general belief of the existence of such beings was well established, without doubt they were often seen and talked with:

For fear does things so like a witch,
'Tis hard to find out which is which.

They likewise animated almost every thing in Nature; and attributed even the passions and qualities of the mind to peculiar deities, who presided over, or directed and caused them. Mars inspired courage and magnanimity; Venus, love; Mercury, cunning; and Apollo and his muses, wisdom and poetic raptures. A good and evil genius attended every

man, and his virtues and vices were esteemed to be spirits. A wicked man had an evil spirit; a virtuous man, a good one; a wrangler had a spirit of contradiction; those who could not speak had a dumb spirit; a malicious man, a spirit of envy; and one who wanted veracity, a spirit of lying. Diseases, too, which were uncommon, and could not easily be accounted for—as apoplexies, epilepsies, and other fits and trances—were imputed to spirits and demons; and at last these delusions, which were only the fancies of poets, or the inventions of priests, became the real opinions and religion of the common people.

When the pagan world became Christian, the new converts carried all these phantoms with them, which the priests of “holy mother church” have since turned to more profitable account than turning them into verse. The heathen dryads and nymphs were changed into fairies; good and evil genii into conjurors, and black and white witches; while saints were made to supply the office of demi-gods. This adaptation of pagan demonology enabled the Christian priests to enrich themselves by charms, exorcisms, beads, relics, holy water, and invocation to the saints. There was scarcely a churchyard, or an old or empty house, which was not infested with these airy inhabitants; nor a man who had murdered himself, or who had been murdered by another, or had forgotten something in his lifetime, who did not appear to tell his own story; nor could be persuaded to quit his new abode until the *holy man*, for an adequate fee, had laid him in the Red Sea. We may be certain so gainful a trade was duly cherished by clerical juggles and impostures, and that every advantage was taken of surprising and unusual phenomena of Nature. By the help of uncommon voices and noises, phosphorus, magic lanthorns, feats of legerdemain, collusion and confederacy, these prejudices were artfully kept up, and weak and enthusiastic people were made to believe, sometimes to see, and afterwards to publish to others, their visions, or whatever else their deceivers had occasion for.

Among the deceptive methods resorted to by the Spanish priesthood, to give effect to the phantasms which they have invented in order to govern mankind, they are in the practice of exhibiting pictures to their audiences towards the close of their sermons. One of these impostors, for instance, after having expatiated with as much fervor as possible on the torments of hell, gives a signal to one of the attendants to bring in the picture which exhibits some devils running sharp and red hot irons into sinners. The devils are painted most frightful, with horns, claws, and serpentine tails. The souls are symbolized by girls, because the word soul is of the feminine gender in Spanish, as well as in some other languages. The “reverend father” places a lighted torch before the picture, that it may be better seen by the spectators; and, with the most hideous and hypocritical vociferation, he denounces everlasting torments to the unrepenting, like those the painter has there represented; thus frightening instead of persuading sinners out of their wickedness.

In those countries where pictures are not resorted to, the clergy are not the less active in terrifying mankind into obedience. They represent God as pouring out unbounded vengeance to all eternity. The fanaticism of their hearers is fed with the idea of hell, where God, transformed into a ferocious executioner, as unjust as implacable, bathes himself in the

tears of his wretched creatures, and perpetuates their existence to render them everlastingly miserable. There, clothed with revenge, he mocks at the torments of sinners, and listens with rapture to the groans with which they make the brazen roof of their prisons resound, without the smallest hope of some distant abatement of their pains to give them an interval even of imaginary relief.

Nor are the supporters of the crescent less sanguinary or less zealous in depicting the horrors of the damned, than their worthy and charitable brethren of the cross. "Those (says the Alcoran) who do not believe shall be clothed in a garment of fire; boiling water shall be poured on their heads; their skins and their entrails shall be smitten with rods of iron: whenever they shall strive to escape from hell, to avoid its torments, they shall be again thrust into it, and the devils shall say unto them, 'taste the pain of burning.'"

I have been led to these remarks in consequence of recently perusing a pamphlet, entitled "An Essay on the Existence of the Devil, and his supposed influence on the human mind," by Richard Wright, unitarian missionary, Liverpool; in which this writer has so completely demolished "Satan's kingdom," that he must have roused the indignation of the orthodox, particularly the bishops and priests, who, without his Satanic majesty, would want the main prop of their religion. Mr. Wright has clearly demonstrated, that the popular notion of the devil is altogether unfounded; and as some of his remarks display a degree of intelligence beyond the generality of that possessed by men of his description, I have made a few extracts from the work, which I shall now take the liberty of quoting:

"The universe, (observes Mr. W.) comprehending the natural and moral worlds, is governed by fixed laws; to suppose, therefore, the intrusion and interference of an invisible evil being in the conduct of men, is an infraction of those laws, and a manifest absurdity. If the devil can secretly influence men, and through them human affairs, it must be in a way distinct from, and contrary to the laws of Nature; for they all work for good; but he works only for evil. Such secret, and I may say supernatural operations, for they are above the powers of Nature of which we have any knowledge, suppose the devil to be possessed of miraculous powers. If the devil can gain access to the minds of men in a secret way; can dispose them by his suggestions, and move them to action by his influence, without operating by the laws of Nature, then he can operate miraculously; to suppose which is a gross error and absurdity. If it be said he operates by the laws of Nature, then he must, in some sense, possess the government of Nature; and, if so, God either works by him as an agent, or he guides Nature independent of God. If the former, he is God's servant; if the latter, how is God the governor of all things? How are we to reconcile with the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God, his continuing in existence, and in the possession of such wonderful powers, a being who is only evil, and will ever remain so; who always acts in opposition to him; continually stirs up rebellion against him; who is the author of all evil, and who neither does, nor ever will do, any thing but mischief in the creation? He must either exist in dependence on, and derive his extraordinary powers from God, or he must exist in-

dependent of him, and possess his power underived. If his existence be independent, and he possess an underived power, he must himself be a God; but if he be dependent, and his power derived, the question will arise, how can God communicate such extraordinary powers, but for useful purposes? Notions so repugnant to reason, and attended with such insuperable difficulties, ought not to be believed without the clearest evidence.

To be continued.

APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS.

Continued from No. 26, Vol. 1.

Peter.—If Simon behold not the power of Christ, our Jesus Christ, he will not believe that he himself is not the Christ.

Simon.—Most sacred emperor, be careful of believing them, for these are they who are circumcised, and who practise circumcision.

Paul.—On our part, before we knew the truth, we observed the circumcision of the flesh; but, since the truth hath been revealed to us, it is the circumcision of the heart with which we are circumcised, and with which we circumcise.

Peter (to Simon.)—If circumcision be evil, why art thou circumcised?

Nero.—Is Simon then also circumcised?

Peter.—He could not otherwise have deceived souls, if he had not put on the semblance of being a Jew, and had not pretended to teach the Law of God.

Nero.—Thou, Simon, as I perceive, art actuated by envy, and that is the reason why thou troublest them. For I see there is a great strife between thee and their Christ, and I fear lest thou shouldst be convinced by them, and shouldst appear to be consumed with great plagues.

Simon.—Art thou seduced, O emperor?

Nero.—What meanest thou? "Art thou seduced?" I see evidently thou art the adversary of Peter and Paul, and of their master.

Paul.—He who taught Peter hath instructed me by revelation. But since he accuses us of being circumcised, let him now say why he is himself circumcised?

Simon.—Why questionest thou me of that?

Paul.—Because of thy interrogating us.

Nero.—Why fearest thou to answer them?

Simon.—I am myself circumcised, because circumcision was commanded of God at the time I received it.

Paul.—Hast thou heard, O emperor, what Simon hath said? If then circumcision be good, why hast thou betrayed and caused to be killed hastily those who are circumcised?

Nero.—But I think not well of you.

Peter and Paul.—Whether thou thinkest good or evil of us is of no consequence, for of necessity the will of our master must be fulfilled.

Nero.—And what if I will it not?

Peter.—It is not that thou wilt, but what he hath promised.

Simon.—Good emperor, these men have abused thy clemency, and yet thou hast countenanced them.

Nero.—Thou hast not yet satisfied me on thy own account.

Simon.—I wonder, after having displayed so great works, thou shouldst yet doubt.

Nero.—I neither believe nor disbelieve either of you; but answer forthwith to the question put to you.

Simon.—I answer nothing at present.

Nero.—Thou sayest *that* in order to deceive; and if I have not power to constrain thee myself, God, who is almighty, will do it.

Simon.—I will answer thee no more.

Nero.—And I will no longer put confidence in thee, for, as I perceive, thou art a deceiver in every thing. But to what purpose do we continue this discourse. Ye have all three convinced me of the indecision of your minds, and ye have caused in me so great uncertainty respecting all matters, that I know not whom to believe.

Peter.—As for me, I am a Jew by nation, and I preach all those things I have learnt from my master, to the end that ye might believe there is a God the Father, invisible, incomprehensible, and infinite; and one Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Creator of all things. We proclaim to all men him who hath made heaven and earth, the sea and all things therein; who is truly King, and his reign shall be without end.

Paul.—That which he hath said I likewise avow; since there is no salvation in any other, but in Jesus Christ alone.

Nero.—Who is the King Christ?

Paul.—The Saviour of all nations.

Simon.—I am he of whom you speak; and know, Peter and Paul, that it shall not be as ye desire, that I should find you worthy of martyrdom.

Peter and Paul.—May that we desire be granted, and mayest thou, Simon Magus, who art full of bitterness, never know good, because, in all thou sayest, thou liest.

Simon.—Hear me, Cæsar Nero, to the end thou mayst know that these men are impostors, and that it is I who have been sent from heaven. The day after the morrow I will ascend into heaven, and I will make them blessed who believe in me; and I will show my wrath against those who have dared deny me.

Peter and Paul.—God hath preordained us for his glory, but thou art now instigated by the devil, and thou goest quickly into torments.

To be continued.

ADAM.

[Translated from Gruber's New German Encyclopedia.]

Continued from No. 26, Vol. 1.

That our Mythus did not spring from Hebrew ground, and is not to be considered as the work of a Hebrew sage, but that it is founded on ideas and traditions, which the Hebrews brought from eastern Asia, is clear, partly from certain traits of the narrative itself, partly from the concurring theories of the other oriental religions. To the former belongs the

aprons of fig leaves, and the idea of the principal rivers rising from one source, suggested by *India*; to the latter, the *tree of life* and the seducing serpent, which both play a conspicuous part in the ancient Persian and Indian religions. The Persians have their *Hom*, the tree of immortality, which revives the dead at the resurrection. The Indians have the paradisiacal tree, *Parajati*, the fruit of which frightens away *Ambert* (death,) and the paradisiacal tree *kalpaurksham*, which bears meat and drink for the immortals. Add to this, that our *Mythus*, though in a measure adapted to the Hebrew theology, yet stands in many respects isolated from the ideas of the Old Testament. Even the appellation "*Jehovah Elohim*," is nowhere else to be found. Of the oriental creeds, which run parallel with our *Mythus*, we will mention only one, the *Persian of Zendavesta*: The first parents, *Meshia* and *Meshiane*, were pure and innocent, and heaven was to be their portion if they remained pure in words and deeds. So they remained for a while, and acknowledged *Ormuyd* as the only creator of things; but soon after a bad spirit blinded them so that they adored *Ariman* (the bad principle.) The spirit brought them fruits, of which the woman ate first, and then also the man. They became corrupt, and of their former attributes hardly any remained. So they became sinners (*Darwands*) and dressed themselves in skins and invented iron, but remained ungrateful to God. *Ariman*, as well as the other bad spirits, appear frequently under the form of serpents. 2d. The *religion of Lama* says, "The first inhabitants of the earth existed in a state of happiness and innocence; their days were greatly prolonged by a tree, the fruits of which were inestimable, incorruptible and divine. But soon their happiness ceased. A plant, sweet as honey, sprang from the earth, of which a glutton tasted, and persuaded the others to eat. Voluptuousness arose, and with it *shame*, and the custom of dressing with palm leaves. 3d. According to the *Banians* in India, the highest deity commanded the earth to produce a man from her lap. She obeyed. First appeared the head, then gradually the rest of the body, into which God blew life and motion. Then God gave him a wife, &c. In the Indian *Ezur Vedom* the first man's name was *Adimo*. The great similarity of these oriental creeds with our *Mythus* cannot be accidental. They all derive the existence of evil from human avidity and sensuality. The serpent has been the symbol of cunning, malice, and seduction through all antiquity. The stern monotheism of the Mosaic religion knew nothing of demons. This doctrine, the Jews learned from the Assyrians, and of course the latter Rabbi made a demon of the serpent, which opinion has remained prevalent among Christian interpreters.

Note of the Translator.

This doctrine of the *Encyclopedia* has been taught for at least forty years, in the most celebrated reformed universities of continental Europe. The *first cosmogony*, of which it speaks, is from chap. i. 1, to chap. ii. 4; the *second*, or the *Mythus* inserted by the compiler of *Genesis*, goes from chap. ii. 4, to chap. ii. 24. They are evidently two separate cosmogonies. The diction of the second has many Chaldean roots, and is evidently *metric*; not so the rest. *Jehovah Elohim* should be translated

Lord of Gods, the highest of the Gods. In the genuine Hebrew, *Jehovah* is *Juh*, for the punctuations are often the arbitrary work of the later Rabbi, who, by punctuation, added the vowels e, o, and a, to make it *Jehovah*, which thus came to signify J (Je,) hava, (to be, to live.) At the return of the Jews from the Assyrian captivity, the Hebrew tongue, to the mass of the people, was entirely lost. They spoke nothing but Syriac: and even the Rabbi understood the ancient Hebrew very imperfectly. The name *Juh* must have been vastly ancient, for already with *Homer*, *Jupiter* (pater Ju) is the most ancient God of Gods. The word *Elohim*, is Syriac, and is the plural of *Eloah* or *Elo* (a God.) "*Eli, Eli, lama asaphrani*," cried Jesus on the cross, in Syriac, the language in which he preached and conversed. *Elo, El, Bell, Baal*, and the *Allah* of the present Arabs and Turks, are all of the same root. *Bereshid parah Elohim*, &c. the first words of Genesis, will bear two different translations, besides that which is current in our translations from the Septuagint. 1st. *Bereshid* (a noun proper) made the gods, &c. 2d. In the beginning the gods created the world, &c. But for that it should read: *Elohim parah*, not *parah Elohim*; for the position of the word is all important in so imperfect a language as the Hebrew. Thus, in *Ben David*, David stands in the genitive, but in *David Ben*, both words are in the nominative. The Hebrew wants declensions. The modern translation, *God created* the world, cannot be right; for firstly, it sins against the position, and secondly, *Elohim* is the plural of *Eloah*, and must be translated *Gods*. From which, I conclude, that both cosmogonies are of Assyrian origin, and the *Mosaic* one is lost. In so long and complete a slavery as the Jews suffered in Assyria, the writings of *Moses*, as *Nehemiah* says, and may readily be believed, were lost. Some of the best heads among them, (*Ezra*) at the return to Palestine, collected what could yet be found scattered in scraps here and there, and to give the work a head, added those Assyrian cosmogonies to their collection. This will explain the various incongruous intermixture of religious and civil laws, and the frequent repetitions in the Pentateuch. If *Elohim* is translated *Gods*, it will add another cogent argument against those cosmogonies being of Hebrew origin; and will explain the otherwise unintelligible passages, "*God created man after his own image, likeness*;" the heathen gods being represented as men, only superior in form and mind. So also the passage of "*taking a walk in the garden in the cool of the evening*," for the heathen gods enjoyed themselves like mortal men; and the words "*Behold, man has become as one of us*." This *us* has puzzled the Christian interpreters very much; till at last they agreed it means the *Trinity*. How this can be, when *Moses* cannot possibly be even dreamed to have known of such a theory, as a distinct divine personality of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I do not pretend to determine. This doctrine was first taught long after Jesus's death. The passage of the "*three witnesses in heaven*," is not contained in one of the eighty original manuscripts of the Greek Testament, and is consequently spurious. See Gibbon's Decl. and Fall of the Rom. Emp. vol. 4, page 407—408.

TRIUMPH OF TRUTH.

Continued.

38. It is a fact, that there is nothing which has tended so much to degrade the character of God as the futile attempts of Moses to give human passions, forms, and features to the person of God.

39. It is a fact, that God is without any form, likeness, or image, that can be imagined by man. He is as incomprehensible as he is indescribable; and bears no more resemblance to man than the latter does to a mountain.

40. It is a fact, that Moses informs you, that God was unable to finish this little ball of earth in less than *five days* of hard labour. And yet, with his usual inconsistency, he afterwards informs you that the same God actually created millions of worlds in one day only! And not only millions of worlds in one day, but all of them so many thousand times larger than this globe! So that Moses himself has proved, that if it took his God five days to build this world, it was impossible for him to create the sun, moon, and stars, or all the rest of the universe, in one day!

41. It is a fact, that Moses frequently relates the same story twice, but never twice alike; and that is an infallible sign of a dealer in fiction. Even in the greatest and most terrifying of all his "miracles," he contradicts himself: For in Exodus he informs you that the law was given on Mount Sinai; but when he scribbled his second account, about forty years after, he declares it was at Mount Horeb! See Deuteronomy. What a list of pretended facts have we already collected and exposed, in reviewing the first chapter of Genesis only! And those who cannot perceive them with us must be lost to every hope of regeneration, and possess souls hermetically sealed against conviction.

42. It is a fact, that no man hath ever seen or spoken to God, or God to him, since the creation.

43. It is a fact, that the ancient Jews, for many ages, had only *one* copy of their law for the whole nation.

44. It is a fact, that that copy was always under the sole custody of their interested leader or chief, who could write in and erase with perfect impunity whatever he pleased, without even a probability of being detected. For

45. It is a fact, that out of the whole multitude who followed Moses, he and Aaron were the only two who could read or write. Who, then, could detect the fictions which were recorded by Moses and Aaron?

46. It is a fact, that there is no evidence that any other persons except Moses, Aaron, and the judges could read or write, for many ages; and all these were too much interested to be received as impartial witnesses. You may as well expect to find our priests acknowledge themselves hypocrites.

47. It is a fact, that the Jews not only lost their Bible during the Babylonish captivity, but they even lost their own Hebrew language; and what is now called the Hebrew is, in fact, the Chaldaic or Samaritan. This, at least, is the opinion of a majority of the ablest writers on that subject.

48. It is a fact, that the Jewish nation did not produce a single author, or writer, after their long captivity, who used their former language. For they all adopted the language of their late masters, the Chaldaic, or that of the Greek. And yet the Jewish and Christian priests have the impudence to pretend that the Old Testament has been handed down unimpaired to us!

49. It is a fact, that though dead languages may be rendered permanent by means of grammars and lexicons, still no living language can be made equally stable, without the aid of such extraordinary auxiliaries.

50. It is a fact, that as grammars and lexicons are a mere modern invention, it is manifestly impossible that the Hebrew language could continue permanent for more than a very few ages.

51. It is a fact, that every language has been subject to more or less changes; and as an evidence, we refer to that of the English, which, in the course of a few generations, has not only changed its former orthography and idiom, but even its ancient characters are changed and forgotten.

52. It is a fact, that there is every rational reason for believing that the Hebrew language was not the primitive language of man; and that the Sanscrit is.

53. It is a fact, that we have proved in our "Biblical Challenge" that there is no room for doubting, that all the ancient oriental nations, who occupied those countries from Egypt to Syria, and beyond, all used one and the same language; and also that Egypt was the mother or parent of all those languages. For, as she was the only great and powerful kingdom known in those days, it is evident that she is the eldest likewise: and of course the mother of the Egyptian, Hebrew, Phenician, Arabic, and Chaldaic dialects.

54. It is a fact, that the experiment of ascertaining whether it is possible for a single family of foreign slaves to preserve their language, when surrounded entirely by that of their masters, has been tried a thousand times in our slave states; and on a greater number of souls than composed Jacob's family. But the result has been invariably the loss of the language of the slaves in the course of a few generations. And after four hundred years of captivity their language would be totally lost; and a corrupt dialect of their masters must of necessity have been adopted in place of it.

55. It is a fact, that all the writers of the Old Testament were *poets*, and that that volume was written in blank verse. It is necessary, then, to remind the impartial reader, that all poets were licensed dealers in fictions; and that alone will account for that medley of truth and fiction with which that volume abounds.

56. It is a fact, that the human mind in every age, nation, and religion, has been enslaved either by a mercenary priesthood, or by the early planting of their religious prejudices in the passive and tender minds of our youth.

57. It is a fact, that not one out of a thousand ever after acquires sufficient firmness or strength of mind to examine the rotten foundation on which those prejudices rest for their support.

58. It is a fact, that the Egyptians taught two systems of religion: one calculated for the king, priests, and foreign philosophers; and the other for the people.

To be continued.

DEATH BED REPENTANCE.

Mr. Editor—A gentleman, who, by the way, was not considered by presbyterians to be very orthodox in his religious opinions, being very sick, and not like to survive, was called upon by the parson of the parish, and, after the usual salutation, the parson asked him if he had made his peace with God? To which he replied, "that he had never had any difference with him; and, not having been at war, no formal peace was required." The gentleman alluded to was well known to the writer of this communication. He resided in Great Barrington, Massachusetts; and upon this occasion gave, probably, the best answer to the question, so often asked of persons in his condition, that has ever been given. It is ridiculous to talk of making peace with God on a death bed. The tenor of a man's life must determine his future condition, and not any expressions of sorrow for past conduct at the hour of dissolution. A contrary doctrine has a tendency to promote crime, by leading people to suppose that, if, at the approach of death, they acknowledge an unfeigned belief in the atoning efficacy of the blood of Christ, and sincerely repent of their sins, they will be forgiven *instantly*. Witness the confident assurance of criminals under the gallows. It is both impolitic and cruel thus to deceive mankind. Are the stains of a wicked life to be washed away by the blood of an innocent person? It is high time to relinquish such abominable nonsense.

A. B.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 1827.

The Antidote.—This paper, as reckless of character as it is of principle, persists in its course of slander and misrepresentation. In our last we exposed one of its frequent departures from truth, so common with those who are under the influence of fanaticism, or who aim, by means of deception, at perpetuating the reign of priestcraft. But, so far from feeling any repugnance on account of these tergiversations, the editors of the *Antidote* are becoming more and more practised in turpitude, and in endeavoring to make up for their lack of argument by the boldness and effrontery of their assertions. Not content with falsely charging us with contradictions ourselves, they now pretend that the account given by Mr. Shultz, in a late number of the *Correspondent*, of the origin of the *Old Testament*, or Jewish books, is different from that which we had previously published. They say that we attributed the originating of these books to the famous Council of Nice; whereas Mr. S. asserts that they were fabricated by Hilkiah or Ezra. Nothing can

be more unfounded than this statement; and the conductors of the *Antidote* knew perfectly well that they were recording a falsehood when they committed it to paper. They *knew* that in the History given in the *Correspondent*, of the Council of Nice, it was the gospels, and such books only as compose the *New Testament*, that were there mentioned as having received the sanction of that council. They also *knew* that Mr. S. was *not* alluding to the gospels, or New Testament, but was expressly speaking of the "*Jewish Bible*," or "*Old Testament*, which, he said, was fabricated either by Ezra or Hilkiah, the Jewish priests.

Although, when the *Antidote* made its appearance, we anticipated a great deal of abuse, and abundance of false reasoning and sophistry, because we were aware that these are the only weapons resorted to by bigotry and fanaticism; yet we scarcely expected, after so much boasting as appeared in its early numbers, about sincerity, honesty, and liberality, that its editors would have been so shameless, so destitute of principle, and so profligate, as wilfully to pervert the truth. We were desirous to enter the lists with honorable antagonists, and every way disposed to make allowances for the prejudices arising from education. But, as we cannot consider them in that light, and have the best reasons for believing that their views are directly opposed to their professions, we can only regard them as objects of pity until they return to reason, which is of infinitely more importance than all the frenzy of all the fanatics that ever existed on the earth.

Institution of Practical Education.—We frequently visit this excellent seminary, under the superintendence of Mr. Robt. L. Jennings; and every visit affords us additional reasons for believing, that no mode of teaching, except the one he has adopted, is calculated to give the human mind a proper direction, and to form the character as it ought to be formed. The aptness with which the children receive instruction, their increasing inquiries after knowledge, and the astonishing progress which they have made in little more than two months, all demonstrate the correctness of our statement. But it is necessary to witness this, in order to form a just idea of the superiority of the system. The moderate terms also (only \$130 per annum) on which boarders are admitted, and instructed in all the useful branches, renders this institution an object of great importance in a pecuniary point of view, and cannot fail to recommend it to the attention of all, particularly to those at a distance, who are desirous of conferring on their offspring a liberal education. From our own personal observation, we are satisfied that parents may rely on their children being properly and kindly treated.

Ecce Homo!—This work (complete) is now on sale at the office of the Correspondent, corner of Vesey street and Broadway, and the bookstore corner of Reed and Greenwich streets; price 75 cents, in boards. A liberal deduction will be given on quantities purchased for distribution.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION, BY M. DIDEROT.

Concluded.

It is the education of youth which makes a Christian believe in Christ, a Turk in Mahomet, and an Indian in the incarnations of the Vestnou. It is the education of youth which makes the Siamese believe the wonders that are told him about Sommonocodom.

Faith, in every country, is only a blind deference to the sentiments of the priests, who are always infallible where they are sufficiently powerful.

Our priests are unceasingly talking to us of the weakness and errors of the human mind; but is the mind of a priest more infallible than mine? Is his understanding less subject to error than that of an unbeliever? May not his passions and interests deceive him in the same way that others are deceived?

We no sooner refuse to believe on the bare word of a priest, than he endeavors to frighten us; but the terror he excites in us is not a convincing argument, neither can fear be a motive of credibility. *Believe, or you will be damned.* This is the strongest argument in theology.

But is it certain that I shall be damned for not believing what appeared to me incredible? Divines have long been asked to reconcile the dogma of eternal punishment with that of infinite mercy; but this they will not meddle with; yet still they persist in representing our heavenly Father as a tyrant, to whom no father of a family would wish to have any resemblance.

Why would you punish a guilty wretch when no utility can arise from his punishment. What good results to mankind, or to the Deity himself, from the punishment of the millions of unfortunate beings who have already been damned?

The dogma of eternal punishment is the offspring of folly, of atrocity, and of blasphemy. If God will punish eternally, what proportion exists between the offence and the chastisement? If he punish for his own satisfaction, he becomes a monster of barbarity. If he punish to correct others, his rigor is useless for those who are not witnesses of it.

But further: Why is this God so wrathful? Can man, either living or dead, tarnish his glory, and disturb his repose and felicity? If God be offended at sin, it is because he *wills* to be offended. If God will eternally punish sin, it is because he *wills* that sin shall eternally be committed.

It is pretended that God will burn the wicked man (who can do nothing against him) in a fire that shall endure for ever; yet should we not regard as culpable any father who should plan the easiest death imaginable for his son, though that son had compromised his honor, his fortune, or even his life?

God the Father, judges mankind deserving his eternal vengeance; God the Son, judges them worthy of his infinite mercy; the Holy Ghost remains neutral. How can we reconcile this verbiage with the unity of the will of God?

All the evils that could possibly be committed, would only merit an infinite punishment; yet, in order that we may always be terrified at the idea of Deity, the priests have made *man* sufficiently powerful to offend the Author of Nature to all eternity!

All the evil which man is capable of committing is not all the evil that possibly might be committed. How can a finite being, a worm of earth, offend the infinite being who created him, or disturb the powers which regulate the universe?

I should, without hesitation, believe any respectable individual who might bring me the intelligence of an army having obtained a victory over its opponent, &c.; but should the whole population of Paris assure me that a dead man rose from his grave, I would not believe a word of it. When we find that a historian has imposed upon us, or that a whole nation has been deceived, we must not take these for prodigies.

A single demonstration is more convincing than fifty unconnected facts. Pontiff of Mahomet! cause the lame man to walk, the dumb to speak, the blind to see, or the dead to rise from their graves, and to thy great astonishment my faith shall not be shaken. Wouldst thou have me to become thy proselyte, lay aside these pranks, and let us reason together. I have more dependence on my judgment than I have on my eyes.

How canst thou believe that God requires to be worshipped? Weak mortal! What need has the Deity of thy homage? Dost thou think that thou canst add any thing to his happiness or to his glory? Thou mayst honor thyself by raising thy thoughts to the Great Author of thy being, but thou canst do nothing for him; he is too much above thy insignificance. Always bear in mind, that if any kind of worship be more acceptable to him than the rest, it must be that which proceeds from an honest heart. What matter then in what manner thou expressest thy sentiments? Does he not read them in thy mind? What matters it in what garments, in what attitude, in what language thou addressest him in prayer? Is he like those kings of the earth who reject the petition of their subjects, because they have been ignorant of, or disregarded some little formality? Pull not down the Almighty to thy own littleness, but believe that if one worship were more agreeable to him than another, he would have made it known to the whole world. Believe that he receives with the same goodness the wishes of the Mussulman, the Catholic, and the Indian; that he hears with the same kindness the prayers of the savage, who addresses him from the midst of a forest, as those of a pontiff, who wears the tiara.

Nothing could be better adapted to overthrow morality and destroy it altogether, than to couple it with religion; neither could any thing be more pernicious than to make men believe that they offended God when they injured themselves or their fellow creatures; and hence arose the necessity of obtaining God's favor, without any regard to the duties they owe to their brethren.

Reason tells us, that when we commit crimes, it is men, and not God, that we injure; and common sense tells us, that we injure ourselves when we give way to disorderly passions. The Christian religion teaches us to imitate a God who is cruel, insidious, jealous, and implacable in his

wrath. Christians! with such a model before you, what will be your morality? Can the God of Moses, of Joshua, and of David, be the God of an honest man?

A religion is dangerous when it confounds our ideas of morality. A religion is false when it destroys the perfections of the Deity. A religion is detestable, when it substitutes for its worship a vindictive dæmon instead of a beneficent God.

Christians! in obeying your gospels to the letter, you will be neither citizens, husbands, fathers, friends, nor faithful subjects. You will be pilgrims on earth—strangers in your own country—fierce enemies to yourselves, and your brethren—and your groans even will not leave you the hope of ever being happy.

Modern Credulity.—In the course of the day, the president of the convent (at Damascus) had been endeavoring to persuade me that the age of miracles was not past, and that these divine agents of conversion were as necessary to be exhibited to mankind in the present day, as at any former period. In illustration of his position, he brought to me a small modern engraving, representing the late Pope Pius VII. lifted up from earth, in divine ecstasy, and there suspended in the air by divine power, while officiating at high mass in his pontifical robes before the altar, on the day of Pentecost, in the year 1811. It is not stated, in the inscription at the foot of engraving, at what particular place this pretended event took place; but Rome is to be inferred, as the Pope seldom, if ever, officiates in his sacred functions except in that city. Much as I had seen of religious imposture and religious credulity in Palestine, I had seen nothing so barefaced and palpable as this. The fact of engraving and publishing such a print in Europe at the present day, sufficiently evinces how far priestly impudence will go in attempting to pass off the grossest delusions on mankind, for it is evident that the originator of such a publication could not have been ignorant of the fraud; and the veneration with which it is received and preserved among those for whose edification it is professedly intended, is a strong proof of the credulity of ignorance.—*Buckingham's Travels.*

Mahometan Parable.—A grand signor caused his vizier's arm to be cut off, and proclaimed that the arm should be thrown up, and whoever caught it falling should succeed in the vizier's place; but upon terms to be served the same sauce at a year's end. When the crowd was come together to catch this arm, one man, more diligent and dexterous than the rest, caught it. So he was vizier: and, at the year's end, his right arm was cut off, and thrown up as before; and he himself, with his left arm, caught it again; and after his second year, his left arm was cut off and thrown up, and he caught it with his mouth. This is to show what men will suffer to gain a pre-eminence over others.